

YOUR GUIDE TO OBSCURE HORROR AND EXPLOITATION ON VIDEOTAPE

VIDEOOoze™

FALL 1990 NUMBER ONE THREE DOLLARS (US)



Witch-Hunting

plus • euro-horrors • rosalba neri
fanzines • drive-ins • and much more



"You VILL subscribe," suggests Marco the Vampire in a shameless plug for next issue's coverage of a pair of obscure Filipino vampire pics. This is from *The Blood Drinkers* (aka *The Vampire People*).

contents



ON THE COVER
Archetypical witch-hunters burn an innocent peasant girl at the stake in Memmer's *Twins of Evil*.



Departments

2 EDITORIAL

The Evolution of a Horror Addict

13 MINI-PROFILE

Rosalba Neri

14 REVIEWS

Buried Alive, The House That Screamed, The Devil's Female, La Bestia y La Espada Magica, The House That Vanished, The Hanging Woman, The Sadist of Notre Dame, The Scorpion with Two Tails, Count Dracula's Great Love, 99 Women, Castle of the Creeping Flesh

23 FANZINES

European Trash Cinema, Spaghetti Cinema, Absurd, Little Shoppe of Horrors

24 SOURCES

B-Movie Heaven

24 MISCELLANY

FYI, Collecting, Thanks, Next Issue

Features

5 THE WITCHING HOUR

Inquisitorial Witch-Hunting in the Horror Film
By BOB SARGENT

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The Evolution of a Horror Addict

THIS IS PROBABLY more of an introduction than an editorial (but I suppose we can save the discussion of hot topics and stirring up of controversy for later). When I was a kid, I was growing up in a place called Downingtown, Pennsylvania. Looking back on that period in my life I was able to clearly identify four major influences that sparked my ongoing love affair with the horror film (twenty years and still going strong) and forever changed my viewing habits.

The first was my association with the Warner Theatre in nearby West Chester where I would typically get dropped off with a buddy on a Saturday afternoon for the kiddie matinees. Our little brains were twisted by films like *Yog. Monster from Space* and *The Robot versus the Aztec Mummy*. During some shows, ushers would actually dress up like monsters and stumble around in the dark while us little kids pelted them with popcorn and Good 'N Plenty. A longtime friend who still lives in the area (thanks Tom!) told me the Warner closed its doors for good about eight years ago but it was the last of its kind to go because the college students helped to keep it alive long past its prime.

After I got into my

teens, I graduated to the local drive-in (and major breakthrough number two). At the time I probably never realized how lucky I was to have a place to go to like the Exton Drive-in. Every week they seemed to have an exciting new line-up of choice horror and exploitation films (some of which I never saw because of my underage handicap). I can remember amazing triple bills like *The Beast in the Cellar*, *The Creature with the Blue Hand* and *Beast of the Yellow Night* running one week while *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* and *Night of the Living Dead* played the next. Sometimes longer shows would run until dawn.

Too bad it's gone. I recently visited the area and found myself sorely missing that nostalgic piece of my childhood. The land upon which the Exton Drive-in sat was once owned by a guy named Dick Thomas (who made a big name for himself locally with his famous foot-long hot dogs). Apparently, the drive-in's 100-year lease had Mr. Thomas chomping at the bit as he watched all the surrounding real estate sell for top dollar in a rapidly growing area. The story goes that the same day the

lease was up was when the bulldozers moved in and plowed it over (like what will probably happen in Hong Kong when that lease expires in 1997). A sad day indeed as another generic shopping center and parking lot stands there now. Some of my most memorable movie-going moments were spent at that drive-in and those long gone days are dear to my heart.

I recently discovered there is one drive-in still operating in the area where I now reside. Maybe I'll get up there and check it out before it too disappears. Whoever said nothing lasts forever sure knew what he was talking about.

Earth-shattering event number three involves the one place I found still standing — the Charles News Agency. This was where I bought my earliest copies of *FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND* before I finally coerced my folks into getting me a subscription. The first time I actually laid eyes on a copy was at a friend's birthday party. I was so taken with it that he gave it to me and I still have it today. It was #67 — a special issue on witches and witchcraft with a great illustration of Lon Chaney Jr. on the cover. Last year at Fanex 3 in Towson, MD (where the high point for me was

meeting Forry Ackerman) a large group of us observed how funny it was that FM fans could almost always remember which issue was their first (right down to the number and what was on the cover).

My fourth and final mind-blowing experience of those formative years was the discovery of a local Saturday night, horror show host on WPHL-17 which broadcast out of Philadelphia. You know... he was the guy who got stuck showing all the "B-raters" and worse. Every area in the country seemed to have one and ours was a wildman named "Dr. Shock".

I never missed the doc's show and over the years he

fed me a steady diet of Universal classics like *House of Frankenstein* (one of my favorites) and *Dracula* (with Bela Lugosi) along with fantastic trash like *The Mad Doctor of Blood Island* (which the censors — much to my adolescent delight — forgot to edit out the gore and nudity the first time it was broadcast).

I don't know what his real name was but Dr. Shock did freelance acting around the area and was reportedly "a real nice man" according to a channel 17 staff member I recently talked to. She was one of two people still working there who remembered anything about him at all. Unfortunately, the

new management pitched all the old records (so the trail abruptly stopped right there) when they took control of the station.

I would guess "Scream-In" (that was the name of the show) ran from about 1967 (the first time I saw the doc sit up in his coffin) up to at least 1975 (when my family left the area for good) but the same programming manager said that the show seemed like it "was on forever". Dr. Shock passed away in 1982 which was a loss for me as it would have been a real treat to look him up for an interview after all these years.

So there you have it, some insights into the mind of a rabid horror

addict and four major points of interest from his past that contributed to making him the way he is today. Oh sure — other events since have further transformed me but none have had the lasting effect that these first four did.

Without further adieu, welcome to the first issue of VIDEOOZE! The focus within these pages will be mainly on the international scene. The reason for this being I find these films much more interesting than the current U.S. product. Unfortunately, releases from the sequelitis-stricken U.S. horror and exploitation market that break any new ground are few and far between (as evidenced by the multiple pas-

Typical Extortion area newspaper ads from the early seventies.

teurized exploits of profitable corporate faves like Jason and Freddy). Originality and imagination have (for the most part) long since gone out the window causing this fan to jump ship in a big way.

I suppose the economics of filmmaking are also to blame. Many filmmakers are under contractual agreement to deliver a picture with a certain rating [R, for example]. Time constraints and budget problems often force them to make cuts to appease the MPAA review board that can (and frequently does) seriously compromise the integrity of their films.

When an American product comes up against European and Japanese productions working under far more relaxed standards (at least where sex is concerned), it is no small wonder that the results look decidedly prudish in comparison. Occasionally some prize may slip through the net forcing me to commit some ink to it but for the most part you won't see much coverage of American films here.

Why a guide to obscure horror and exploitation on video? Video is the only way you'll see this stuff, that's why! With the U.S. market flooded with so much dreck, why not examine some of the fascinating works from overseas that may be sitting neglected on the shelves of your local video club? You may have had access to some real treasures all along and not even known it!

Admittedly there is a lot of retitling confusion but VIDEOOZE will try to do its part to help sort some of this out by listing video



Headless corpses anyone? Dr. Lorca did it before Herbert West in this pre-*Reanimator* blood-drenched classic from 1970.

retitles along with original titles in reviews. There is nothing more frustrating than reading about some intriguing movie in a film book and then not be able to locate it on tape — only to later stumble onto it by accident at the video club (disguised by another name given to it by some chuckle-headed video exec). There is also the problem of some films being reissued so many times under so many different names that you could end up renting the same film for multiple viewings.

Paul Naschy and Dario Argento are two of my favorite foreign filmmakers. Your average video viewer in the U.S. has never even heard of these guys! Those of us masochists who are inter-

ested in seeing their work must typically contend with severely edited U.S. versions of their films or grainy bootlegs, not to mention the blank looks received from some who must wonder what we get out of what appears to be amateurishly staged, poorly executed, atrociously dubbed garbage.

I also love the films of Hammer Studios [my ever-growing collection has 57 titles to date] and wax nostalgic about British horror cinema overall. You can count on seeing some space devoted to these topics in the future as well.

As I would definitely like to start running a letters column in the next issue, it would be helpful if some of you would write with your comments and

suggestions. Send them to VIDEOOZE, c/o Bob Sargent (that's me), P.O. Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304. I would like to reply as often as possible but postage is expensive (especially overseas) so a contribution of a stamp or two would be appreciated.

For the record, I wanted to briefly state how this fanzine came to be named VIDEOOZE. A title has to be an accurate reflection of the fanzine's contents, right? So rather than dub it something outrageous like so many other fanzines in an effort to be radically different [which has actually had the reverse effect, making them all sound the same to me] I settled on VIDEOOZE (which I credit to my wife, Kay). I think it's more descriptive of what's inside than something like EXPLODING VISCERA or BLOODY CHUNKS. As the central unifying theme is international horror and exploitation on videotape, I defy anyone to come up with something better.

Having read quite a few other fanzines, I've decided that editing one seems like entirely too much fun not to try my hand at it. I have a lot of healthy enthusiasm (and experience) to offer and everyone I've invited to contribute has expressed much excitement about the project. Layouts will be as illustrated as possible and designed with arresting typography (I want this to be read). Editorially, I promise to strive to present intelligent and provocative writing. So with the aid of a Macintosh computer (and countless lunchtime work sessions keystroking this stuff) here's my best shot. I hope you find it worthwhile. ■



The
**Witching
 Hour**
**Inquisitorial Witch-Hunting
 in the Horror Film**

IT MUST HAVE BEEN re-reading Edgar Allen Poe's *THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM* that first set

the wheels in motion driving me to write this article. Although Poe's classic story is fiction, the Inquisition it dealt with most definitely was not. Horror cinema is primarily fantasy-oriented, so using the Inquisitorial witch-hunts as a subject for a horror movie struck me as being somewhat contradictory because some of the best in this cycle of films were more based on fact and less concerned with the fantastic. ¶ Characterized by high levels of violence (and this was a terribly violent period of history), these pictures chronicle the witch-hunts initiated

ed by the Inquisition — and the resulting Reign of Terror which lasted for several hundred

years. Interestingly, most of the films being examined here are European-made (where some of the worst human rights abuses of the time were recorded). Some were made by filmmakers who were trying to cash in on a trend and make a quick buck. More serious directors crafted pictures that really had something to say. Some did a little of both. In many cases, it is difficult to judge who was doing what. This author's observations are based on recent screenings of all the pictures discussed herein with comparison to actual historical documen-

BY BOB SARGENT

tation (and to each other). Interested parties should probably view some of these and draw their own conclusions.

The first person recorded as having been executed as a "witch" while the Inquisition ran amok was probably a woman (who was suspected of having relations with the devil) back in 1245 by the Inquisitor of Toulouse.

French inquisitors exterminated the Knights Templar during the 14th century after accusing all members of this secret society of acts usually ascribed to witches. Many horror fans are probably familiar with Spanish director Armando de Ossorio's quartet of films that revolved around the activities of an order of undead religious knights of the same name. The first film in the de Ossorio series (and probably the best) was *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (1971).

Most of the major heresies had been crushed by the end of the 14th century but rather than disband, the Inquisition expanded their policy to include sorcery as a crime against the Church. A handbook for witch-hunters was even published in 1486 (called the *MALLEUS MALICARUM* or "Hammer of Witches") detailing all the facts pertaining to witch practices as well as proper procedures for obtaining confessions in the inquisitorial courts. Unfortunately for the accused, the dice were heavily loaded against them. Judges automatically assumed that accused witches were guilty until proven innocent. To make matters worse, no defense could be allowed (as anyone who defended heresy would certainly be guilty of it themselves). Torture was sanctioned by Pope Innocent IV in 1257 (only to be reinforced by decrees handed down by later Popes) so it was used regularly and frequently. Although inquisitors sought confessions through torture, the so-called evidence by which most were brought to trial in the first place was often enough for a conviction. Gossip and half-formed suspicions were perfectly sufficient grounds for an arrest.

Many of the films dealing with this subject, though brutal and graphic in their depiction of the horrors inflicted upon the general population by witchfinders, are often more serious and historically accurate than past critics (some of whom I doubt even saw the pictures based on their reviews) have given them credit for being. Actual historical figures were a good springboard for many film storylines and the standout in this respect is *The Conqueror Worm* (1968). Director Michael Reeves (who sadly died at age 25, an apparent suicide) picked the infamous Matthew Hopkins (magnificently played by Vincent Price) for his last picture that is widely considered a masterpiece.

Hopkins was probably the most vicious professional witchfinder who ever operated in 17th century Protestant England. In Reeves' powerful film, Hopkins and his henchman (a lout named John Stern) roam the country-

This film is based upon historical fact. The principal characters lived and the major events depicted in the film actually took place.

side finding witches and riches wherever they went. The demagogic Hopkins saw his opportunity and took full advantage of a system in which he could not fail to succeed.

While the real Hopkins was discredited and forced to retire after his methods caught up with him (he died of tuberculosis shortly there-

after) the film ends much more dramatically. Having subjected the bride of a young Cromwellian soldier to unspeakable cruelties, Hopkins and Stern are pursued and meet violent ends. At the climax, the soldier (Ian Ogilvy) is driven berserk by the sight of his wife being tortured and breaks free to hack Hopkins to pieces with an axe until a horrified friend steps in to finish Price off with a well-placed bullet. The version of this film released by American International was cut to obtain a "PG" rating. Only British prints of this film (titled *The Witchfinder General*) are complete.

In Phil Hardy's book, *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HORROR MOVIES*, Hopkins is described as "a man who sets out to rid society of a deeply ingrained evil that has become an accepted part of daily living." As much as I like Hardy's book, this assessment is in error because the "evil" in question (witchcraft) is not portrayed in the film. No real witches are persecuted (as a matter of fact, little or no witchcraft is displayed in most of these pictures — the exceptions will be discussed shortly), only innocent bystanders who were unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This motif comes up time and again throughout the witch-hunt films. In Reeves' picture, the soldier's wife Sarah (Hilary Dwyer) is spotted in a field and raped by Stern. Another example can be found in *Mark of the Devil* (1970). After a passionate session in the sack with her lover, a nude young woman picks an inopportune time to expose herself in a window, attracting the unwanted attention of a peasant-turned witchfinder named Albino (Reggie Nalder) and his pack of lusty thugs.

While I'm on the subject, I also have to disagree with Hardy's perception of "the rippling muscles of the machoman as the ideal of masculinity" implying that we are invited to identify with them in the sequel, *Mark of the Devil, Part II* (1972). The gruesome tortures and humiliating abuses that are heaped upon (mostly, but not entirely) women victims are administered by clods who are so grossly unattractive that it would be impossible for male viewers to identify with them the way Hardy suggests.

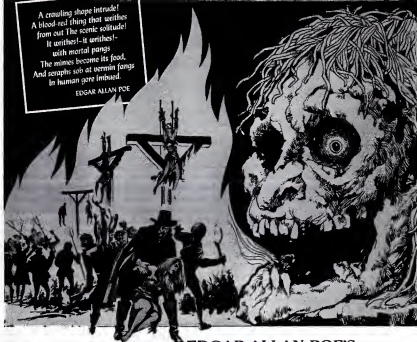
Both of Adrian Hoven's *Mark of the Devil* pictures linger on the trial aspect of the witch-hunting frenzy (which affords plenty of opportunity to present many har-

Opposite page: Promotional poster for Michael Reeves' impressive last film, *The Conqueror Worm*.

**LEAVE THE CHILDREN HOME!
...and if YOU are SQUEAMISH
STAY HOME WITH THEM!!!!!!!**

A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes
from out The scenic solitude!
It writhes!-it writhes!
-with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food.
And seraphs sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued.

EDGAR ALLAN POE



EDGAR ALLAN POE'S
THE CONQUEROR WORM
IN **COLOR** by PERFECT
FROM AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL

STARRING **VINCENT PRICE** • **IAN OGILVY** • **RUPERT DAVIES** • **HILARY DWYER**
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PRODUCED BY DIRECTED BY SCREENPLAY BY
TONY TENSER • **LOUIS M. HEYWARD** • **MICHAEL REEVES** • **MICHAEL REEVES & TOM BAKER**
BASED ON A POEM ENTITLED
"THE CONQUEROR WORM" BY
EDGAR ALLAN POE

rowing (and ugly) torture chamber sequences) but seeing the bloodshed and cruelty is a key to understanding the horrors of the Inquisition. Witnessing this kind of mistreatment makes it extremely easy to see how the Inquisition managed to instill such terror in the peasantry. While Hoven's pictures do not tell their stories as well as Reeves' film, they are (contrary to popular belief) only marginally more intense in their handling of the torture and execution scenes. Their undeservedly bad reputation probably came about thanks to an effective and well-focused advertising campaign — the one with the famous vomit bags that rated the film "V" for violence. Hoven's past association with Jess Franco (who had his own well-thumbed book of cinematic excesses) probably didn't help much either.

It is easy for some (like Hardy) to dismiss these pictures as being sadistic sex films (and nothing else) but I've found it just as easy to defend them (or the first one at least). The costumes and locations are wonderfully Gothic (it's the subject matter that is unsightly). *Mark of the Devil* devotes considerable screentime to the interplay between rival factions of witchfinders (with more subtle touches than some critics give this film credit for) and (albeit badly dubbed) bits of conversations amongst the commoners go a long way in helping the viewer to gain a mindset on the forces that helped to shape people's ways of thinking at the time. The sequel is less successful in both the latter respects which leads me to believe that it was director Michael Armstrong's influence that so greatly enhanced the first picture (because something was clearly missing in the second when producer Adrian Hoven took over directing duties for the second).

"This film is based upon historical fact. The principal characters lived and the major events depicted in the film actually took place."

Many in the witch-hunt cycle of pictures open with similar testimonials to lend more authority to themselves. This one is from Ken Russell's *The Devils* (1971) which happens to be an exceptionally potent entry that pulls no punches. A historically (in part) accurate narrative that appears in *Mark of the Devil*, following a graphic public execution (death by immolation) of two women accused of witchcraft, sounds like this...

"In Europe, between the 15th and 19th centuries, it is estimated nearly eight million people were convicted of heresy and executed by fanatical witch-hunters in order to save their souls.

Their deaths on the scaffold or the funeral pyre was for them the release from agonizing torture which often lasted for years.

This motion picture shows

three cases taken from authentic documents from the time when witch-hunting had reached its peak and can only give a slight idea of the cruelties of one of the blackest pages in the History of Man."

Though precise figures are unobtainable, it is doubtful that 8 million people had died as convicted witches during that time period. A more realistic tally would place the number at somewhere around 200,000. The highest totals of those who had gone to the stake were accumulated in Germany (conservatively estimated at a minimum of 100,000) where the frenzy scaled heights unmatched anywhere else in Europe. The runners-up would be France and Scotland (according to one 1903 authority who records the Scots as having burned 70,000 witches — but this is unlikely as the real figure was probably closer to less than 10,000). England only executed about 1,000 and America (including the infamous Salem, Massachusetts) even less.

Reminiscent of actual 17th century "prickers" (instruments used to probe for the devil's mark) is a particularly evil-looking needle used by Albino during a nasty probing of an innocent waitress in *Mark of the Devil*. It was widely believed by the witch-finders that a pin stuck into these marks (which could be anything from a birthmark to a wart) would cause neither pain nor bleeding. The validity of their test is certainly in question as healthy skin can close up behind the tiny wound a pin inflicts, allowing for no bleeding. It is also true that some points on the skin are relatively pain-free as many scars and other kinds of fairly commonplace blemishes are typically insensitive. It is also quite understandable that anyone would be in a state of shock (especially a woman) after having been mauled, stripped naked in a crowded courtroom or atop a public platform, shaved all over her body (to facilitate the search for the tell tale signs) and probably tortured previously — so that she would feel no pinprick even if her skin were unblemished.

Many witch-hunters subscribed to the notion that some devil's marks were invisible to give suspects no chance at all. Naturally these marks could only be found out through the use of sharp instruments. Some profes-

sionals who entered the trade at the height of the frenzy used devices with retractable blades that slid back into hollow handles when pressed against the skin of the accused and caused no discomfort. *Mark of the Devil's* witchfinder general, Lord Cumberland (Herbert Lom) has an even nastier-looking pricker than Albino's which is fitted with a sickle-like blade which he uses to great effect later on in the picture.

In *Mark of the Devil*, corruption in the church is ram-



Olivera Vuco is put to the question in Michael Armstrong's *Mark of the Devil*.

pant and miscarriage of justice is the order of the day. A nun (Gaby Fuchs) who was raped by a bishop is tortured and killed to protect his reputation, a sexually impotent witchfinder takes unfair advantage of his position to deal harshly with any cases related to his dysfunction and a young baron is persecuted so that his riches be forfeited into the Church coffers. While the baron's plight is but a sidebar in the film, it provides the basis for the entire storyline in the more simplistic sequel (*Mark of the Devil, Part II*) which substitutes a rich widow (Erika Blanc). The peasants aren't exactly shining examples of decency either as they all too gleefully take part in opportunities to abuse discredited aristocracy (the baron and a monk come to mind) in the original film.

"For those who turn against our savior — no punishment is sufficient," says Cumberland during a bloody scene that is one of the most difficult to watch of the whole subgenre. Having failed to get a confession, the torturer is instructed to extract an extensively tortured woman's tongue using a set of toothed pincers (to insure her silence concerning the matter of a clergyman's illegitimate child). Kind of pointless considering they burn the poor wretch alive afterwards. Sixteenth-century French writer Jean Bodin observed these methods to be considerably milder than the tortures of hell the accused witch was soon to undergo.

Incidentally, some reviewers have reported that Albino escapes at the end of the first film. Although he does resurface (as a different character named Natas) in the second picture, Cumberland murders Albino in the original for threatening to denounce him. It is Cumberland who escapes leaving his more sympathetic assistant (Udo Kier) behind to be butchered by an angry mob with an implement similar to a *man-catcher* [a two-pronged pole arm with spiked edges curved to encircle an opponent].

One of the worst histories of torture in the annals of witch-persecution is attributed to seventeenth-century Bamberg, Germany. While initial attempts at inducing confessions included forced feeding of heavily salted food (without water), more brutal means were readily employed when tamer methods proved ineffective. Thumbscrews, leg vices, stocks with iron spikes and the cutting or tearing off of limbs or breasts were common.

Paul Naschy may have taken a leaf from the history books for his directorial debut, *Inquisition* (1976) as there is an extremely nasty nipple-ripping ordered by the Judge Bernard de Fossey (played by Naschy himself). While Spanish-made, the action for this witch-hunting tale is set in 16th century France. Naschy himself explains the reason for this as being pressure from the Spanish censors. He was informed that he would be jailed if he insisted on situating the story in Spain. He also received

Because, as I imagine you have heard, the evil one always prefers to use women for his evil business. That's the custom it seems.

anonymous telephone calls threatening him with death. Interestingly, Hammer Studios had plans for making a picture about the Spanish Inquisition (to be called *The Rape of Sabina*) but abandoned them after getting a tip that the Catholic Church would ban the picture. The sets were used for *Curse of the Werewolf* (1960) instead

(which, conversely to Naschy's situation, forced them to set a story in Spain that was originally to take place in France because the sets were already built).

As the Spanish liberalization process had yet to start, no one in the Spanish film community wanted to have anything to do with Naschy's picture and he was forced to sign up with an Italian producer. This was a common problem for Naschy who continues to make films in his home country despite this kind of resistance. Prints of his past work were even burned at one time like the ill-fated sequel to one of his best works *Count Dracula's Great Love* (1972) causing his production companies in their various incarnations to be in constant danger of financial ruin.

Naschy recognizes that *Inquisition* is a very harsh picture and expected the opposition from the censors. It also contains some fantasy sequences and implies the existence of real witches which separate it from those titles previously discussed. The female lead, named Katherine, uses dreams to reveal the identity of her lover's murderer. It ends up being de Fossey who desired the girl for himself. When Katherine ultimately seeks revenge upon him through the aid of witchcraft, a connection of witchcraft to Devil-worship is clearly made.

Prior to the time when witchcraft came to be named a heresy, the idea of a sabbat (also represented in Naschy's picture) was entirely unknown. Some authorities insist that the development of the whole sabbat idea took place in the minds of witch-hunters and demonological theorists of the 15th century. Sex played a fundamental role in all witch celebrations (with female initiates usually required to have sexual intercourse with the devil) and the witchhunters (along with some filmmakers) were obsessed with this aspect. The sequences in *Inquisition* employ all the conventions like participants dancing naked, the Devil (Naschy again) marking the young initiate and so on.

It is implied that most of Katherine's dream sequences are drug-induced (as an old crone is seen to be applying an ointment to the young girl's undraped body on several occasions) and prompted, no doubt, by a considerable amount of suggestion. Mention is made, in actual historical accounts, of ointments used to cover the entire body (witches always attended sabbats naked as clothing was thought to impede the flow of magic). Experts point out that some mind-altering substances when rubbed into the skin, would be just as effective as swallowing them.



In one of her best roles, as Angel Blake, Linda Hayden displays her seductive charms in Piers Haggard's effective *The Blood on Satan's Claw*.

Most of these substances were meant to instill in the recipients the power of either flight or metamorphosis and many witches (or at least those who sincerely thought themselves to be witches) were convinced that they were so empowered due to the properties of the ointments.

As in *The Devils*, Naschy's picture shows a countryside ravaged by an outbreak of plague giving it that medieval touch. The superstitions of the peasantry are in evidence and an informer (an ugly, one-eyed servant with an affinity for ogling bathing beauties and stealing their clothes) is included to catalyze the inquisitors into action. *Inquisicion* establishes early on the direction it intends to take when the father of the heroine receives the three officials of the church at his home. "...we discovered 300 people who had given themselves to the devil. Only 50 of them were men, the rest — women," states de Fossey. One of his companions continues on to say "...because, as I imagine you have heard, the evil one always prefers to use women for his evil business. That's the custom it seems."

Cribbing a scene from Tigon's *The Blood on Satan's Claw* (1970), Katherine seduces Judge de Fossey in his religious retreat after she discovers his treachery. Ultimately Katherine is denounced as a witch but the

judge is implicated as well and both are burned at the stake. The narrative in *Inquisicion* is a little jumpy but the film stands as one of Naschy's most coherent works to date (although some of the prescribed methods for seeking out witches go unexplained making them appear exploitative).

Another Spanish director tackling the subject in a similar manner was Jess Franco with his French production *The Demons* (1972). A witch (Anne Libert) takes revenge on the officials who burned her mother at the stake through the use of a deadly kiss that withers the recipient into a skeleton. As is typical of Franco's work, the horror element is downplayed while the sex angle is grossly overdone (but the film is still engaging).

Franco's *The Demons* has a pre-credit sequence detailing the examination of a witch. Pins are shoved into her arms and boiling water poured over her body. She is subsequently burned alive but not before pronouncing her curse upon her enemies — Lady de Winter (Karin Field), Renfield (Alberto Dalbes) and the Lord Justice Jeffreys (John Foster).

In addition to heavily playing up the sex element, there is a ridiculous sounding musical score which actually seems to herald any on-screen carnal activities. Lady de Winter seems more interested in women (although she

and Renfield have a vigorous session while a witch is being "put to the question") and spends most of her time pursuing two young girls (daughters of the witch executed at the beginning of the picture) with whom she became infatuated with after examining them for virginity at a convent. Medieval lesbianism aside, and the picture does revel in unfettered sexuality to the point where it is almost pornographic, *The Demons* presents many well-developed characters and does take a valiant stab at a meaningful storyline. Franco merely gets (intentionally) more bogged-down with the sex than most — not that there is anything wrong with that but the extent to which his preoccupation goes with all the female leads grinding their crotches into the camera becomes downright goofy.

Gordon Hessler's *Cry of the Banshee* (1970) reunites Vincent Price and Hilary Dwyer. This time, Price is a cruel magistrate named Edmund Whitman who takes his persecution of a local coven of devil worshippers a little too far. Their leader, named Oona (Elizabeth Bergner), seeks revenge and summons an evil spirit called a *sidhe* (Patrick Mower) to infiltrate and slaughter the entire Whitman household. Most of Lord Whitman's offspring are sadists who do as they please with the peasants — raping and murdering at will. What places this picture firmly in the fantasy category is the ofttimes depicted devil-worship and witchcraft in use along with the scenes of a real monster ripping its victims to bloody shreds.

At times confusing, perhaps due to some crucial scenes cut prior to release, this is the tamest of all the films in this discussion but it does serve to illustrate a few points. One scene that stands as a typical example of the injustices visited upon the populace during this bleak period is where a waitress is selected from a crowd and summarily executed (by being tied to a wheel and burned alive) when one of her neighbors accuses her of being a witch. Informers were encouraged by the Church so occurrences like this were not uncommon. Besides spiteful neighbors, wild accusations were often made by paid informers and thrill seekers. The results were usually disastrous for the accused.

When a group of bored teenage girls threw out accusations wholesale some 22 people were put to death in Salem, Massachusetts. 17th century English children were persuaded by witchfinders to act possessed and then incriminate innocent people for having bewitched them. *The Blood on Satan's Claw* takes the bewitched children concept a step further with some decidedly chilling results. The story takes place in 17th century England



The rubber-headed monster of Chano Urueta's silly but fun Mex-epic *The Brainiac* makes an organ request of an unwilling donor.

to slay devils). Director Pier Haggard's well-photographed picture has many interesting sequences (one with young Linda Hayden seducing a priest in his own church comes to mind) and is an effective (albeit gory) addition to the witch-hunt cycle.

As of this writing *La Chiesa* (1988) has yet to be released on video in the states. I have found this picture (directed by Michele Soavi and produced by Dario Argento) is only available in an Italian language version so (not being fluent in Italian) some of the dramatic effect was lost on me. The film opens as Teutonic knights in the Middle Ages track an alleged young witch to her lair with the aid of a craven informant. As she is slain by a particularly unfriendly looking soldier (and his comrades hack the informant to bits), the screen explodes into a witch killing-orgy as the knights are seen rampaging through a village slaughtering peasants by the hundreds. In their haste, the knights even lose one of their own with both horse and rider plunging headlong into a mass grave. They are hurriedly buried along with the dead (and some not so dead). The whole sequence is quite a spectacle and Soavi's gliding camera seamlessly makes the transition from the past to the present where we discover a cathedral has been erected on the site of the massacre.

Mentioned earlier, Ken Russell's visually striking and unsettling film *The Devils* chronicles the activities of the philandering Father Grandier (Oliver Reed hitting a career peak — this is easily one of his best roles) as he fights a losing battle against political factions that seek to tear down the walls of Loudon, a 17th century French town. Grandier's foes employ a professional witch-hunter (Michael Gothard giving a decidedly over-the-top performance) who manipulates the Mother Superior (Vanessa Redgrave) into making false accusations as part of a conspiracy to discredit the militant priest. With the arrival of the witch-hunter, the film degenerates into a maelstrom of torture and madness culminating in Grandier being burned alive at the stake. The truncated version of *The Devils* that is available on Warner Home Video is reportedly missing some scenes such as one where a

and starts with a ploughman (Barry Andrews) unearthing some grisly remains that are determined to be parts of a devil. The evil that quickly spreads through the children of a small farming community induces them to include rape and satanic rituals in their games. Patrick Wymark (who also appeared in *The Conqueror Worm*) is a judge turned witchfinder who arrives just in time with the means to save everyone's souls (apparently a blessed sword designed

mountain of lust-crazed and naked nuns are being exorcised. Strong stuff for sure but well worth seeking out.

A lighter treatment of the Inquisition appears in Chano Urueta's *The Brainiac* (1961). Baron Vitellius (busy sixties actor/producer Abel Salazar) is found guilty of heresy by a Mexico City tribunal in 1661. The inquisitors have had a tough time meting out punishment as the Baron seems to be immune to any tortures they inflict upon him. He even finds the whole affair to be rather amusing and laughs while the Grand Inquisitor hands down his sentence. They settle for burning him at the stake which finally does the resilient Baron in — but not before he can pronounce a curse on the descendants of the tribunal. He also takes the opportunity to perform a few feats of magic (causing his leg shackles to vanish and revealing the identities of his masked enemies). Cheaply made, it's a fun film to watch but not one for serious study.

Similar in theme (though not a period piece) to Franco's *The Demons* is the South American made *El Inquisidor* (1975) where two young women (who turn out to be witches) kill their tormentors through sorcery. The present day setting clashes with an old castle where all the inquisitorial tortures (topless women are stretched on a rack, burned alive, etc) are administered by nut cases acting out sick fantasies (instead of the usual misguided church officials) making this an offbeat entry to the subgenre.

Another cinematic anomaly is controversial Italian director Marco Bellocchio's *La Visione del Sabba* (1988). It never got a theatrical or video release in the U.S. but the Italian language version of the film can be obtained through MONDO VIDEO. The slow-moving story, set in modern times, tells of Maddalena (sultry Beatrice Dalle) who is a mentally disturbed young woman who "bewitches" a doctor employed to help her. Smitten by the alluring beauty, he gradually allows her to consume his life (she unintentionally destroys a relationship with his present girlfriend, etc).

The Inquisition enters the picture through a series of atmospheric medieval sequences where the frequently nude Maddalena is subjected to a battery of tests by a group of religious officials (which are less graphic than those in other examples of the subgenre) attempting to prove that she is a witch.

While most of the segues between the present and the past are abrupt, some are handled with a considerable amount of finesse such as one where the doctor takes a swim in a beautiful lagoon populated by contemporary teenagers. An exhausted Maddalena's body suddenly plunges beneath the water but when the two of them resurface, they are no longer in the present day. The doctor encounters a group of soldiers who have apparently been ducking Maddalena as another part of the witch testing. Although stylishly done, the film seems to miss a healthier-budgeted opportunity to explore the witch trials in depth and merely touches on them in a perfunctory manner.

For some, like *La Visione del Sabba*, the witch-hunt is merely a backdrop so that another story might be told — like in Hammer's entertaining *Twins of Evil* (1971) where the Puritan-like Brotherhood burns innocent peasant girls while the Karnstein vampire drama takes center stage. *Night of Dark Shadows* (1971) throws in a few flashbacks that include some witchfinders and a hanging from an outrageously high platform but these are only relevant to the possession plot in a marginal way and could have been replaced with another device to achieve the same end. Others, like Naschy's *Inquisicion*, almost hit the nail on the head but get sidetracked with the fantasy elements. It is interesting to note that in pictures like those of Hoven or Reeves, there are no real witches but only innocent victims while films like *El Inquisidor* and *The Demons* both have women resorting to actual witchery to achieve revenge against those who have wronged them.

A recent issue of VARIETY stated that Stuart Gordon is starting up production (again) on his film version of *The Pit and the Pendulum*. To hear him talk in a recent interview (that I was lucky enough to see in the unreleased *Gorgon Video Magazine Volume 2*) leads one to believe that we may yet see the definitive version of Poe's story on the screen.

Whatever the approach, the Inquisition provided a ready-made history of amazing complexity for filmmakers to use in their efforts to draw curious crowds into movie theatres for the express purpose of being scared out of their wits. For this writer, the most horrifying aspect of all this is the fact that a large amount of what appeared on the screen echoes what really happened just a few centuries ago. ■



Patrick Mower gets his head blown-off in an excised scene from *Cry of the Banshee*.



Rosalba Neri

Actress

INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE TO GENRE FANS, THIS erotically-charged Italian actress (aka Sarah Bay) thrilled male filmgoers in the 1960s and 70s with her distinctive good looks and frequent nude scenes. Of her many film appearances, *Lady Frankenstein* (1971) ranks among the most memorable. In this sexploitative effort, Ms. Neri portrays a surgeon who fabricates her own handsome creation to destroy her father's unsightly monster (and to satisfy her voracious sexual appetite).

Two early associations with director Jess Franco were 99 *Women* and *Justine* (both 1967). Another was the next-to-last of the *Fu Manchu* series starring Christopher Lee called *The Castle of Fu Manchu* (1968). In it she was a gangster wearing a fez but some of her scenes appear to have been cut.

The Devil's Wedding Night (1973) was another fun out-

ing with Rosalba as "The Bloody Countess" in a loose interpretation of the Erzebet Bathory legend opposite Mark Damon (in a dual role). *Slaughter Hotel* (1971) places her in an asylum as an inmate with nymphomaniac tendencies overseen by Klaus Kinski.

Among the peplums she did in the early sixties, the standout is Mario Bava's atmospheric *Hercules in the Haunted World* (1961). One of her lesser known roles was in an obscure Italian shocker, *Girl in Room 2A* (1975) where a maniac in a crimson mask tortures and kills young women.

It's hard to say what Rosalba Neri is doing today as she seems to have disappeared from the film scene altogether after the late-seventies but her films stand as a record of a stunning actress who is still making an impact on a new generation of horror fans. ■



I LOVE READING FILM REVIEWS SO REST ASSURED that you'll see plenty of them in the pages of VIDEOOZE. And what title would be more appropriate to christen the review section for a new fanzine dealing with obscure horror and exploitation than one from that master of pseudonyms and perhaps Italy's most infamous goremeister, Joe D'Amato.

BURIED ALIVE (1979)
aka Buio Omega; Blue Holocaust
Thrillervideo

JOE D'AMATO'S EXCESSIVELY GORY TALE OF A young taxidermist's passion for his dead girlfriend really gets the old gag reflex working overtime. This one is so gruesome and the effects so disgustingly effective that you'll quite literally be watching the film through your fingers. Explicitly showcasing murder, butchery and sick sex, the picture even manages to throw in a few scenes of quasi-cannibalism. There's also a surprise ending that really works [it sure as hell made me jump at 1 AM].

Wealthy Frank's girlfriend, Anna, is hospitalized when her rival for his attention (Iris, the housekeeper) employs voodoo to get Anna out of the way. Frank rushes to the hospital and Anna dies in his arms as they embrace. The manipulative Iris immediately steps in and exerts her dominance over the vulnerable Frank in a twisted motherly fashion. Shortly thereafter, we see Frank shooting up Anna's corpse with some chemicals at the funeral parlor (and so does the funeral director).

After the burial, lovesick Frank digs up his paramour and loads her (remarkably non-rigid) body into the back of his van. Experiencing some bad luck on the way home, he gets a flat tire and an unwanted, pot-smoking

hitchhiker who is too stoned to even notice when Anna's pasty-white hand accidentally flops into their compartment.

Driving straight to his basement workshop, Frank unwisely leaves the sleeping hitchhiker in the vehicle and puts Anna on the slab to perform some of the most graphic and convincing organ removal I've ever witnessed. The scene is drawn out for as long as possible (and lingers on the visceral details) giving our clueless hitchhiker enough time to wake up and interrupt Frank (tripping over a bucket of guts in the process). Finding herself locked in with a nut-case, she attacks and bites Frank in her blind panic. He retaliates by ripping out her fingernails with a convenient pair of pliers before quietly strangling her. Iris catches him stuffing the dead hitchhiker in his van but, rather than react adversely, calmly helps to put nail polish on Anna's corpse which they've moved into the house.

When Mr. Kale (the suspicious funeral director) shows up, he secretly examines the back of Frank's van. Luckily for Frank, Iris had previously moved the hitchhiker's body to a new hiding place. Deciding it too risky to keep her around any longer, Iris chops her up with a huge meat cleaver and dissolves the pieces in a bathtub that Frank had filled with acid. After slopping her remains into the garden, they immediately sit down to a lunch that deliberately dwells on Iris' nauseating table manners until the already queasy Frank pews.

While out for a jog, Frank encounters an injured runner. Taking her back to his home for some first aid, the two youngsters end up sucking face instead. Natural enough, right? Wrong! This transpires on a bed next to another containing cold, blue Anna. The runner doesn't think this is a good idea and screams her displeasure forcing Frank to create another stiff for Iris to dispose of. Out of acid,



A typically gory moment from Joe D'Amato's inglorious ode to necrophilia, *Buried Alive*.

they shove this one in the incinerator and crank up the heat only to discover she's not quite dead!

Pushy Iris announces her plans to wed Frank but he decides he would rather spend time with his old flame. While out for another jog, Frank gives that pesky funeral director time to snoop around the villa again. Finally discovering Anna's body (propped up in a bedroom closet) he escapes with the evidence on film. A confrontation erupts between Iris and Frank after which he picks-up a new girl in town whose only purpose in the film seems to be to take a bath (a cohesive screenplay is not one of this picture's strengths).

When Eleanor (Anna's sister) drops in for a visit, Anna's spirit urges her to leave. Eleanor foolishly presses on and discovers her sister's dead body. Iris bursts into the room with a butcher knife and Eleanor faints. The cutlery is used on Frank instead when he intervenes and a bloody scuffle ensues with the two psychopaths clawing and disfiguring one another. Frank emerges the victor and carries Eleanor to his basement workshop just as Mr. Kale arrives at the front door. Now I wouldn't want to spoil the ending I alluded to earlier so let's just say it's a good shock and leave it at that.

The Thrillervideo print is about 3 minutes shy of the full running time (and I have my suspicions as to what was depicted in that excised segment). Director D'Amato (Aristide Massaccesi) used no name actors here but the closing credits list the music is by The Goblins (the same as heard in several Argento movies).

Oppressively cruel and with no socially redeeming values whatsoever, *Buried Alive* is an almost completely indefensible splatterfest but it does seem to linger in the memories of those who have seen it. Probably not D'Amato's best work (by all accounts, that honor probably goes to *Death Smiles on a Murderer*) but it certainly gets the award for being his bloodiest. Rumors abound that real corpses (brrrr!) were mutilated in some scenes but I find this hard to believe and write them off as a marketing ploy to draw in the curious (look into the controversy surrounding Michael and Roberta Findley's *Snuff* sometime).

If you're a gorehound, you'll love it. If not, prepare yourself for one of the most revolting exercises in senseless brutality you'll ever fry your optic nerves on. Either way, you watch it at your own risk and if it has you projectile vomiting halfway through — don't say that I didn't warn you!

—Bob Sargent

THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED (1969)
aka *La Residencia; The Boarding School*
(No U.S. video release)

ESSENTIALLY THIS IS A WOMEN-IN-PRISON PICTURE masquerading as a horror film. The setting for this sick little gem (which is actually head and shoulders above numerous other WIP/Juvenile Delinquent films) is a European boarding school for troubled girls. A sadistic

headmistress named Madame Fourneau (Lilli Palmer, also in Gordon Hessler's 1971 frenzy of acid-slinging, *Murders in the Rue Morgue*) runs the place like a concentration camp rather than a correction center. Her overprotected son Luis (played by John Moulder Brown who appeared in Hammer's excellent *Vampire Circus*) has voyeuristic tendencies and is meeting some of the girls on the sly in the boiler room.

The story partially revolves around a new girl, Teresa (Cristina Galbo who can be seen being eaten by zombies in Jorge Grau's *Breakfast at the Manchester Morgue*), who arrives just as a disobedient student is being bull-whipped by a nazi-esque head girl (Mary Maude, who was opposite Mike Raven in *Crucible of Terror*) while the others are reciting their prayers. These harrowing disciplinary sessions drive several girls to attempt escapes but they are murdered by an unseen killer (my television print leaves little to see except for a fairly nasty stabbing and a freeze-frame throat cutting) and their bodies disappear without a trace.

The film is an odd mix of traditional Gothic elements with exploitative conventions (like pre-arranged meetings with a lusty woodcutter for procreative activities in the shed) and borrowings from the psycho-killer subgenre (one unfortunate girl gets her hand hacked off leaving only a bloody stump) thrown in. There are a few references to lesbianism that crop up (even in the TV print) but they are handled so subtly that they merely become another footnote in a subconscious backlog of perverse goings-on. Sudden loud noises (from clocks and dinner bells) and a reverberating soundtrack combine with mysterious shadows, rotating doorknobs and ghostly hands opening transoms, all contributing to the creation of an incredibly oppressive atmosphere.

Irene, the head girl, delights in torturing and humiliating her classmates which ultimately forces Teresa (who is given an especially hard time) to leave (and subsequently fall victim to the killer). Teresa's death indirectly causes Irene's fall from grace with Madame Fourneau whose iron grip on the students begins to loosen (because Irene threatens to reveal potentially embarrassing details about Madame's harsh methods of discipline). This sets the stage for Irene coming to her very own bad end (now, more than ever, we expect Madame Fourneau to be the killer).

The best shock arrives as the picture climaxes — in Luis' attic workshop where we discover his butter has completely slipped off his noodles. Up until now, he has been portrayed as being rather harmless so we aren't ready for it when he is revealed to be the mad killer. Luis has been secretly constructing his future wife by sewing together the best parts of his victims to conform to his mother's standards of what the ideal girl should be. During the closing moments, crazy Luis locks his horrified mother in the workshop with the rotting composite corpse (so that they might get better acquainted). Her

Overlook: One-sheet for AIP's 1971 U.S. theatrical release of *The House That Screamed*.

ONE BY ONE THEY WILL DIE!

Only the killer
knows **why**
and **how**
and **who**
is next!



THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED

STARRING

LILLI PALMER

CRISTINA GALBO • JOHN MOULDER BROWN • MARY MAUDE • NARCISO IBÁÑEZ SERRADOR

WRITTEN BY
LUIS VERNA PEÑAFIEL

MUSIC BY WALDO DE LOS RIOS

AN ANABEL FILMS PRODUCTION released by AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL Pictures

DIRECTED BY

NARCISO IBÁÑEZ SERRADOR

— PANAVISION® COLOR —

GP



subsequent screams together with some quick-cut editing and the effective musical score had me, quite literally, leaping out of my chair with my hair standing straight up.

The screenplay is respectably tight and every element has a reason for existing — including the blood and sex (unlike many other films of the period that incoherently string together as many cheap thrills as their running times allow). I'm not saying this is bad as I find the latter types of films equally enjoyable to top-notch stuff like this.

American International released the truncated version I have of this film which was produced by the Madrid based Anabel Films. Director Narciso Ibanez Serrador, who is Uruguayan-born, wrote the screenplay under his pen name Luis Penafiel and also contributed an entry to the demonic children sweepstakes in 1975 called *Who Can Kill a Child*. I would be interested in getting that film reviewed as well so if anyone has access to it please contact me.

—Bob Sargent

THE DEVIL'S FEMALE (1977)
aka Beyond the Darkness; Magdalena
CIC Video (Canada)

THIS LITTLE SLEAZE GEM FROM GERMANY turned out to be quite a pleasant surprise. After reading an alluring blurb in the *VIDEOMANIA* catalog, I searched all my reference books for a mention of this one. The only thing I could find were some photos in *EROTICISM* AND THE *FANTASY CINEMA*. Nude shots at that! I sent off my money and began the familiarly agonizing wait.

First glance at the video box didn't bode well. The movie had been advertised as *Beyond the Darkness* and I held in my hand *The Devil's Female*. Did I get the wrong thing? A note with the order indicated that I didn't. Another look at the box revealed unimaginative design and a rather generic video reticle description. I was already disappointed as I stuck it in my VCR to see how bad it was.

Well let me tell you, this sucker delivers, and in a way that only European exploitation product does. It's a standard *Exorcist* rip-off, possession flick but it has no pretensions to be anything else. Chock full of bad dubbing, senseless plot twists, text book exploitation dialogue and full frontal nudity, it's a very enjoyable 90 minute diversion.

The film starts off with a never really explained Jack the Ripper-type murder. Cut to a girls boarding school. One of the girls, Magdalena, starts acting strange at a school party. Magdalena keeps getting stranger and weird things begin to happen around the school. Furniture flies around in the attic. Magdalena takes off her clothes and spits obscenities at the teachers (remembering nothing after the episode). Enter the barrage of doctors and shrinks with well-meaning but ineffectual ideas. Magdalena takes her clothes off and cusses them out too. The doctors hook her up to something that looks like a

shower head with wires. Magdalena goes to church and tells the priest she wants to take communion where the sun doesn't shine. Someone has the bright idea to take her out to the country for a geographical cure. One of the young doctors attending her starts to fall for her in a big way. The doctor's crush makes possible the prerequisite slow interlude with dull, sappy love scenes and silly music. Magdalena takes off her clothes and plays piano. Magdalena takes off her clothes and has sex with an invisible demon (this is low budget remember). The disappointed older doctor and the priest begin to discuss an exorcism.

At this point, the filmmakers run out of money, film, script or all of the above. After some brief mumbo-jumbo, Magdalena spits-up a snake. All better now. No more demon. End of film. Snake-spitting does it every-time.

While I'm sure this review makes this movie sound like pure unadulterated trash, it's very fun pure unadulterated trash. Production values are adequate, the soundtrack music is innocuous and the dubbing pretty atrocious (but the latter adds to the appeal). All in all this is the most enjoyable possession film I've ever seen, helped I'm sure by the feeling that I uncovered a lost gem. Definitely worth checking out.

—Vini Myles

Vini Myles hails from the state of Massachusetts. When his writing talent began to shine through in some consistently interesting to read letters, from our videotape trades, I invited Vini to contribute. Happily he accepted and I now look forward to reading the Robert Quarry overview he is preparing with great anticipation.

LA BESTIA Y LA ESPADA MAGICA (1983)
aka The Beast and the Magic Sword
Mondo Video

VIEWING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE VERSION OF A film without subtitles (when you don't understand what you're hearing) is a unique experience. Since the words become less important, you have to pay closer attention to the actions if you expect to have any success at all in making out what is going on. Paul Naschy's rarely seen werewolf movie set in Japan was exceptionally difficult to follow (mostly because my print is in Japanese with no subtitles — I have more luck with the Spanish versions as I can translate a little) but rewarding nevertheless as it was jam-packed with his usual trademark nudity and gore.

Placing the werewolf squarely in the far east offered some novel possibilities. When the two first meet (the lycanthrope surprises a group of unlucky samurai camped out in a wooded area) the orientals find they can't hold a candle to their subhuman attacker and are effortlessly slaughtered. A similar situation arises when the werewolf tears through the occupants of a Geisha house like a hurricane (ripping kimonos off women and viciously bit-



Andrea Allen is pursued by the unseen killer in Joseph Larrax's competent *The House That Vanished*.

ing through jugulars in typical Naschy fashion). The poor bastards never knew what hit them.

The (disappointing) albino werewolf make-up is a bit of a mystery to me but the many atmospheric scenes help to make up for it and classify this as one of the better unrelated Daninsky outings. There are enough fight sequences (against unclothed ninja women in a hot springs, ghostly creatures with fright wigs and an evil, one-eyed samurai) to qualify the picture as *chambara* (Japanese swordplay cinema).

All of the above scenes, coupled with those of a snarling werewolf crashing through rice paper walls, made for some pretty lively viewing. There are some overly talky segments (which probably would have been of much more interest to me had they not been dubbed in Japanese) but don't let that deter you from checking out what is otherwise one of the prolific Naschy's best looking films ever.

Some of the action takes place in a dungeon setting where a group of women try to effect unorthodox cures (?) for the stricken noble. One such technique was releasing a tiger (!) into his cell [probably the first time in cinema history where a werewolf and a Bengal tiger battle it out]. There is also a swordsman/herbalist (?) who befriends and attempts to cure him (played by Sighezu Amachi who also appeared in the 1959 version of *The Ghost of*

Yotsuya). Per the Naschy formula, a Japanese girl falls for Waldemar and ultimately liberates him from his existence of misery by killing the werewolf with a silver sword.

I clocked my copy of this film at exactly 90 minutes but Phil Hardy's *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HORROR MOVIES* lists considerably longer running times and leads me to wonder what I've missed as this print did seem incomplete to me while I was watching it. Still a worthwhile addition to any Naschy enthusiast's collection and one this fan will be avidly searching for in an English language version. One of Naschy's more recent efforts *El Aullido del Diablo* (to be called *Howl of the Devil* in the U.S.) was the subject of a furious legal squabble and not released but boasts the latest appearance of his best known character, Waldemar Daninsky. *La Bestia* is the tenth film to feature the perpetually cursed nobleman.

—Bob Sargent

**THE HOUSE THAT VANISHED (1973)
aka *Scream and Die; Psycho Sex Fiend*
Video Treasures**

THE TITLE THAT APPEARS ON THIS TAPE, WHILE obviously not the original, is by far the most appropriate

of the three choices above for this rather slow moving (but not boring) thriller. Competently directed by Joseph [Vampires] Larraz, this film sports good production values and acting in a well put together package with the feel of a spiced-up British murder mystery. While the movie never reaches the intensity of the scenes of lesbianism and bloodsucking of the following years' *Vampyres*, the on-screen murders add visual punch to the story.

A somewhat convoluted plot begins with Valerie (Andrea Allen), a young and beautiful London model, tagging along with not-so-savory boyfriend Terry to a remote house in the country. Instructed to wait in the car, she doesn't and uncovers Terry's intention to burgle the place. Surprised by the returning occupants, they hide in a closet and become witnesses to a murder. An unseen, silent man (with only black leather gloves (*a la* Bava and Argento) for us to identify him by) murders a prostitute he has brought back with him. We witness the graphic knife murder over the killer's shoulder. Valerie panics and bolts, alerting the killer to their presence, and he pursues her in an atmospheric chase through a junkyard. She escapes by hiding in a junk car and hitchhikes back to London the following morning. She returns to her flat to find Terry's car (but not Terry) parked outside and an identifying photo removed from her portfolio which was in the car. The killer knows who she is and where she lives. A friend advises her to wait and see, feeling that the whole thing was set-up by the not-very-popular Terry.

One by one new characters are introduced so we have an array of possible killers to choose from. We meet a photographer who is overly anxious to do some nude shots. We meet Paul, an effeminate young mask-maker who lives with his overly protective aunt. It turns out Paul is involved in an incestuous relationship with said aunt and this allows for a disturbing scene, explicitly showing them in their un-beautiful nakedness and rather animalistic passion. There is also a new downstairs neighbor who has a strange affinity for pigeons and wears black leather gloves.

The second on-screen murder occurs when Valerie's roommate Lorna returns from vacation in the south of France. She is pretty quickly done away with by the killer who strips, rapes and strangles her (again graphically). The plot culminates with a trip to Paul's house in the country (which turns out to be the same house as in the beginning of the film). At this point the killer is unmasked and justice is served.

The ending of the movie, while explanatory, seems somewhat abrupt as if editing to reduce running time was mostly done during the climax. A couple of plot points and characters remain under-explained. While I won't reveal the ending, it is not a tremendous surprise as any of the possibilities would have made acceptable killers.

The film is well photographed with some nice use of colors, especially vivid blues and reds (again, *a la* Argento). Characters move from rooms bathed in blue to settings in red making for some effective visuals. Also woven into the script are ample opportunities for Ms. Allen to display her attractive form and bare her breasts.

The pacing is somewhat slow (but consistent) right up to the end where, as I mentioned before, things get rather abrupt. Music is used efficiently to aid the visuals and help set the mood.

All in all not a bad film and certainly not a disagreeable way to spend 90 minutes. If there is a less edited version somewhere I'd like to see what light it sheds on the story.

—Vin Myles

THE HANGING WOMAN (1972) *aka Beyond the Living Dead* Showcase Productions Inc.

PAUL NASCHY MAKES MERELY A TOKEN APPEARANCE in this briskly paced Euro-chiller. Serge Chekov (Stelvio Rosi) arrives at a deserted railway station in the Carpathians en route to his late uncle's estate. Nightfall looms and ignoring a superstitious guard's advice the bold fellow decides to take a path through the local cemetery.

In the cemetery, Chekov stumbles across the body of a woman hanging from a tree. He seeks help from local residents — all of whom are too afraid to open the door to him. Eventually Chekov is greeted with hostility by the butler of a large house by the cemetery. After a scuffle, the maid of the house (Dianik Zurakowska from *La Marca del Hombre Lobo*) invites Chekov in where he quickly explains his discovery to the lady of the house. It quickly transpires that the dead woman was the sister of the lady of the house.

The local police are called and investigations are underway with immediate suspicions directed at a necrophilic gravedigger, Igor (Naschy) who has a collection of ladies underwear (as the inspector exclaims "Ladies underwear, by gad the scoundrel!") and a collection of photos of naked female corpses.

Meanwhile Chekov and the other members of his uncle's family and friends hear a reading of his will. All the property and fortune are left to Chekov. The jealous bitch who was the dead man's wife is incensed and insists that Chekov sell the house. The doctor of the house however insists that the house be kept open and he is allowed to carry on with his experiments into nebula electricity.

The plot thickens and several further murders are committed. Igor is found walled-up and suspicion falls upon young Chekov. The story continues with an occasional murder here and there to keep the viewer interested. Why does the late uncle's wife call a seance? What are the purposes of the doctor's experiments? Where did these zombies come from?

Even without Naschy's presence, this film is of considerable interest to admirers of Spanish horror. It's basic, old fashioned story owes much to the Edgar Allen Poe syndrome and to the Universal films of the thirties and forties. The only real difference aside from the continental settings are the gruesome make-ups and the mild nudity. Very atmospheric and occasionally very stylish,

The Hanging Woman is a lot more enjoyable than many other films of its type. The vocal dub-overs are suited to the characters (the butler in particular has a rich cockney accent!). Naschy's appearance is most welcome and, as usual, he plays the part with conviction. Director Jose Luis-Merino and Naschy worked together on a couple of projects including *Tarzan en las Minas del Rey Salomon*, a film that Naschy regards as one of his best in terms of acting.

—Nigel Bartlett

Nigel Bartlett is undoubtedly Paul Naschy's number one fan in Great Britain. In between editing his own excellent fanzine, RAW VIRUS, he has taken the time to pen some thoughtful reviews and I hope he will be forthcoming with more in the near future.

THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME (1979) *aka Demoniac; Exorcismes et Messes Noires* Mondo Video

ARE YOU CAUGHT UP IN THE WAVE OF FRANCO-mania that seems to be sweeping through genre movie collectors? Do you find yourself shelling out \$20 everytime a version of a Franco film with 3 or 4 minutes of additional footage pops-up as a 3rd or 4th generation bootleg? I do. I chose to review this particular film because as well as containing the requisite amount of sleaze one expects from a Franco film, it has an intensity that makes it quite watchable.

Let me start off by saying that one of this film's biggest attributes is Franco casting himself in the lead role. While I had seen quite a few films where Franco had cast himself in small "throwaway" parts, this was the first time I had seen him attempt a major dramatic role — and I was impressed. Here, he portrays the tormented, excommunicated priest with frightening flourish. While the direction at times does become lackluster (this is the man who has been known to have his performers "act" in slow motion, or done fades by zooming into public hair), pacing is maintained pretty well through the whole film.

The storyline follows Mathis Vogel (Franco), a disturbed ex-priest who is compelled to kill women to cleanse them of their sins. Through the publishers of a jet-set S&M magazine he uncovers a group he believes to be satanists holding black masses. In reality, these are bored rich folk staging sex and blood shows for amusement. Unable to accept these "acts", Vogel takes to torturing and killing those he believes to be serving the "Dark Angel". In the end, he is captured by police at the Notre Dame cathedral, the centerpiece of the story, after being refused forgiveness by a fellow priest. The moral of the story — taking the Lord's work into your own hands is a no-no.

The portrayal of Mathis Vogel is effective and the scenes of him with his victims have a chilling edge. The first murder scene has an aggressive prostitute push a reluctant Vogel over the edge. Once he is pushed, he goes

from introspection to actively seeking out what he perceives to be evil. The sequences of Vogel and his victims are filmed in a documentary you-are-there sort of fashion, which proves to be as frightening as killer point of view shots. Scenes of Vogel biting a naked and chained Lina Romay (while admonishing her for her sins) or wiping the blood off his knife on the nude body of a hooker he has just killed (after making her confess to being a miserable sinner) are unsettling. At a black mass, staged by a Count and Countess for their upper-class crowd, the audience can't contain itself when a naked girl is hung upside-down on a cross and stabbed in the crotch. Couples in the audience start having sex during the performance and a full scale orgy breaks out. The Count, who does not participate, is later shown being abused by his dominatrix lover (both of whom are dispatched by Vogel). Most of the sex and violence takes place within the plot as opposed to being inserted to meet a "quota". One lesbian scene does feel particularly gratuitous and its insertion interferes with the timing. An interesting shot at the beginning of a man walking down the street, urinating as he goes, is irrelevant — but the image is strangely unsettling.

The dubbing is O.K. with the Vogel character being particularly well done. The musical soundtrack, while certainly not outstanding, does not in any way detract from the action (check out *Bloody Moon*, halfway into the film the main guitar theme brought audible groans from the people I viewed it with). Another plus is the, thankfully, somewhat restrained use of the zoom lens which is often so relentless in Franco films as to be headache inducing.

I would say that for Franco fans this constitutes a must-see and for the curious I would recommend it.

—Vini Myles

Vini further commented that the version he reviewed is available from Mondo Video, in English with Dutch subtitles. Demoniac is also available on Wizard Video and Import Horror Video offers a Spanish language hardcore version.

Gialli Spotlight

THE SCORPION WITH TWO TAILS (1982) *aka Murder in the Etruscan Cemetery* Palisades Entertainment

AN ITALIAN/FRENCH CO-PRODUCTION DIRECTED by Argento wannabe Sergio Martino (who also did *Turso* back in 1973), this rare *giallo* was unfortunately a bit of a snoozer. Pretty much an incoherent thriller with some routine horror elements and not much to sustain viewer interest. Rather tame for an eighties product, there is no explicit gore or nudity to write home about. Do I detect the censor's hand at work here?

Fresh from Argento's *Tenebrae* is John Saxon in a bit

part as an archaeologist who has his head twisted off twice (first in a dream and then for real). Traveling to Italy with one of her co-workers, the archaeologist's determined wife Joan (Elvire Audray, also seen frolicking with savages a couple years later in *White Slave*) intends to investigate his death.

In addition to the neck-wrings there are plenty of other scenes included for shock value. One such scene straight out of Argento (and typical of so many of these Italian murder-mysteries) has Joan hallucinating about a wriggling mass of maggots while perusing some photographs. The soundtrack even features Goblin-like music in places and there is the trademark animal-in-the-tide like so many of Argento's earlier films.

The scorpion of the title refers to an ancient pendant which Saxon found that once belonged to an Etruscan princess. It eventually ends up in his wife's hands. It later turns out that Joan might be the reincarnation of the same princess.

A subplot concerns a drug shipment that gets mixed-up with some crates full of artifacts from the archaeological dig. The crate containing the missing drugs is found in some tunnels where the heroine is afforded an opportunity to drop her flashlight and go for the usual stumble through the dark with rats, bats and other squishy things underfoot.

The director's pseudonym, Christian Plummer, appears on the box although the name Sergio Martino is clearly displayed in the opening credits. A weak contribution to the *gialli* subgenre at best. Do yourself a favor and rent Argento's *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* instead.

—Bob Sargent

COUNT DRACULA'S GREAT LOVE (1972) *aka Dracula's Virgin Lovers* Sinister Cinema

HOW I HATE NOT BEING ABLE TO VIEW A MOVIE IN its entirety! This is just one example of a horror film that has been totally ruined. Cohesion and continuity thrown to the wind all because either the censorship board felt it too horrific for grown adults or the distribution company felt shortening the running time would make it more economical to release. Whatever the reason, one cannot ever forgive them for completely bastardizing what is probably a very entertaining picture.

Count Dracula's Great Love was one of many vampire movies made in Europe during the seventies and was probably the pick of the bunch from the continental filmmakers. The original story was written by Paul Naschy under the unlikely pseudonym of Jack Mills and later transferred into a screenplay with assistance from Alberto Insua. Javier Aguirre directed Naschy for the first time in this rather mournful but stylish film.

The story is set in 1870 Transylvania. Two shady vagabonds struggle with a coffin through the misty, Universal Studio-type forest until they stumble upon their destination: the castle of Count Dracula. Their

curiosity gets the better of them and they decide to open the coffin, upon which all they discover is a skeleton. Something else stirs in the shadowy hallway as a dark shape descends upon the graverobbers. One is attacked and bitten on the neck whilst the other makes for a quick exit only to receive an axe to his head [courtesy of a rather ingenious Pablo Perez special effect]. Whilst the opening credits come up, the process of the second victim falling down the stairs is repeated several times in a unique fashion and adds a nice stylish touch to the start of the movie. Cut to a scene where a group of young female travellers and their male companion, Imre (Vic Winner), en route to Hungary via the Carpathian mountains have the misfortune to lose a wheel and as a consequence are forced to travel on foot to seek shelter. They find an old sanatorium where they are greeted by a lordly-looking gentleman who introduces himself as a Dr. Marlowe [Naschy] and offers the party shelter.

Strange occurrences begin — Imre and his fiancé disappear, a strange zombie-like creature stalks the corridors at night and Dr. Marlowe (who later, due to cuts, simply becomes called Wendell with no explanation) disappears by day to "check his traps" whilst he reappears at night. Needless to say, all is revealed. Wendell is, in fact, Dracula and in his attempts to revive his dead daughter Rodna he tries to seduce Karen (Haydee Politoff) because her virgin blood is needed in order to bring the daughter back to life. Karen denies Dracula and the lonely Count buries his daughter and drives a stake through his own heart.

Make no mistake, Aguirre's film is very stylish and well orchestrated in parts. The scenes where the vampire girls glide through the corridors show flashes of brilliance and the scene where Rossana Yanni is the victim of an initiation ceremony is also highly stylish and, to a certain extent, quite gruesome. The female leads are all very beautiful and are effective as the seductive vampires. Naschy's presence as the Count (a part he did not originally want to take) is effective enough. Raul Perez Cubero's camera makes good use of Naschy's piercing eyes and the interiors are also very well photographed. Carmelo Bernaola's music score is both appropriate and atmospheric.

The film is marred, however, by some dark photography which appears during exterior shots and lack of continuity between day and night shooting. The last point may be due to the abominable amount of time cut from the original running length.

My main bone of contention, besides the censorship, is the awful (and I mean *terrible*) vocal overdubs. This undoubtedly scars the movie and certain key scenes are ruined by the ridiculous voiceovers. American accents in 1870 Hungary? Now come on! Surely subtitles would be better! That aside though, *Count Dracula's Great Love* is an entertaining, and at times enchanting little picture that fans of Naschy and Spanish horror alike will find hard to resist. Aguirre's sense of the theatrical coupled with the stylish photography and the robust performances from all the cast make this film a little bit spe-

cial. One has to try and forgive the cretins who so nearly ruined this picture. Required viewing.

—Nigel Bartlett

99 WOMEN (1967)
aka 99 Femmes
Republic

A SOMEWHAT BIZARRE WOMEN BEHIND BARS EPIC from Jesse Franco, the most prolific director working in exploitation today. I found the plot to be somewhat standard fare for the subgenre: Thelma, the sadistic bully in charge of a small women's prison on an unnamed Caribbean island, gets demoted to being an assistant for the new humanitarian warden, Leonie. Leonie's soft-hearted approach to running a women's prison causes problems for Thelma's ill-defined, cozy little arrangement with the governor of the nearby men's prison, known as "the governor." As near as I could tell, the "arrangement" consisted of getting newly-arrived inmates from the women's prison to discipline each other in front of the Governor while he disciplines his own little inmate from the privacy of a soft focus lens. Meanwhile, Natalie, the latest prisoner (and the 99th woman of the title role) is victimized by both the cruel methods of Thelma and her own sex-crazed inmate companions, most notably the exotic Zoie, a former nude dancer who killed her jealous former boss in a raging girl-on-girl brawl over Zoie's new boyfriend. Leonie learns of Natalie's plight and intercedes on her behalf, making an enemy of Thelma in the process. Natalie and two of her pals attempt an escape, but get re-captured in the process. The Governor and Thelma conspire to remove Leonie from office by accusing Leonie of having a lesbian relationship with one of her charges. A massive prison riot climaxes the picture in a desultory and somewhat silly fashion, with the enraged inmates running about in their blue shirt-and-panties prison outfits, shrieking and pulling each other's hair.

Pretty standard stuff for a Woman in Prison flick, eh? At first one would be inclined to dismiss 99 Women as a Jesse Franco sexploitation quickie, filmed as an excuse to depict chick fights, flogging, torture, and plenty of soft focus breast shots. . . and one would be correct too. What stands out about 99 Women is how Franco managed to cajole some pretty mainstream European character actors to star in the film. Herbert Lom, taking a break from his recurring role as Inspector Clouseau's boss in the *Pink Panther* movies, stumbles through his part as "the governor" with the acting conviction of an extra from *I Walked with a Zombie*. One might sympathize with Lom, forced to recite such wretched lines as "That little darling I had last night was. . . darling." In contrast, Mercedes McCambridge seems to take an almost fiendish pleasure in her role as Thelma, the vicious warden of the island prison. McCambridge struts around in her spike heels in a very convincing performance, shouting "Discipline must be maintained!" at every other turn.

The rest of the cast puts in a somewhat lackluster performance, except for the excellent Rosalba Neri as Zoie.

Technically, the film shows its level of craftsmanship all too well. The pop-art approach of 1960's European sleaze cinema is very evident here in the quick cuts, zooming closeups, and irritating go-go music pervasive throughout the film. The forementioned habitual soft focus and rather tame nudity make the initial "X" rating of 99 Women almost laughable, though by the standards of the day this was pretty steamy stuff in the USA. For all its faults, however, 99 Women provides some mildly diverting entertainment, especially in the hilarious performances put in by Lom and McCambridge. If you are a Jesse Franco fan, this film will not disappoint you.

—Walt O'Hara

Walt O'Hara is a Virginia based filmmaker who has completed an entertaining trilogy of feature length films that revolve around the exploits of a Dirty Harry type character. The third, Magnum Opus, boasts an appearance by your editor as the shotgun-toting heavy and is more or less a straight thriller but does contain some moments of inspired sickness that should please horror fans.

CASTLE OF THE CREEPING FLESH (1967)
aka Castle of Bloody Lust
International Video

I GUESS I WAS EXPECTING TOO MUCH FROM THIS film, made by Jess Franco associate Adrian Hoven [using the pseudonym Percy G. Parker]. Unfortunately it does not contain a whole heck of a lot to recommend it. The proceedings are only marginally enlivened by Franco regulars Howard Vernon and Janine Reynaud. The movie has all the Gothic trappings (including the title castle) yet increasingly becomes more of a sex film the farther you get into it. Scenes of a drawn out rape interspersed with a voyeuristic Reynaud excitedly baring her breasts and thrusting them at the camera do not a movie make. Hoven somehow succeeds in making this all exceedingly tedious to endure.

If you are subjected to this one, watch for the Baron's big Russian manservant (Vladimir Medar who was the thief in *The Torture Chamber of Dr Sadism*) and the phoniest man-in-a-bear suit I've ever seen. And gimme a break from the seemingly endless scenes of godawful-looking open heart surgery already! In all fairness, this print is edited but based on what I can see here, it is doubtful the missing 3 minutes would contain anything to redeem the picture. I think I've enjoyed Hoven's pictures more when he appears in them himself (even *Cave of the Living Dead* is better than this abortion). A couple years later, Hoven really made a name for himself with the appalling, but effective, *Mark of the Devil* and its mean-spirited sequel (producing and acting in both). Watch these if you really want to be shocked and forget this dull loser.

—Bob Sargent



I AM CONSTANTLY DISCOVERING NEW FANZINES (usually through plugs in other fanzines) and am always amazed at just how good a lot of them are. Even more interesting is corresponding with the people behind them. I have found fanzine editors (for the most part) to be a friendly lot who freely volunteer their time, energy and money in support of the genre we all love. These publications are an excellent forum for readers to exchange ideas with people who have intellectual pursuits similar to their own. Make use of them!

EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA

Craig Ledbetter

P.O. Box 5367, Kingwood, Texas 77325

A FEW DOSES OF CRAIG'S ZINE WILL BOLSTER ANY fan's enthusiasm for European horror and exploitation films. A good representative is issue #8 containing a scathing interview with ex-Paul Naschy associate Salvador Sainz, an amusing review of an Italian Tarzan rip-off, a discussion of *Italianesque* films (an interesting concept with examples) and more.

What I like best about ETC (besides the reviews of some of the most obscure films you never heard of) are the plugs for *overseas* fanzines which I never would have been aware of otherwise. I just wish Craig had room for a letters section [ETC is several letter size sheets folded in half which does not afford him enough space]. He is planning a switch to a new magazine format but this is still in planning so write for subscription rates. Give it a try and you'll be hooked for life. I was.

SPAGHETTI CINEMA

Bill Connolly

6635 DeLongpre #4

Hollywood, California 90028

IF YOU'RE INTO WESTERNS AND PEPLUMS (Hercules and Gladiator films) of the 1960s, then SPAGHETTI CINEMA is for you. Of interest to horror buffs is #37 (although I know Bill is up to about issue #40 now that has a Sergio Corbucci filmography) with a fairly recent Jacinto Molina (Paul Naschy) interview.

Write for a listing of back issues (luckily they're all still available and \$4 each last I checked) as this is an

impressive body of work not to be missed! Past issues have focused on Riccardo Freda, Joe D'Amato, Lamberto Bava and many other genre favorites. Count on plenty of insightful international coverage here.

ABSURD

Ian Counce

12 Union Road, Hursthead, Rochdale, Lancs, OL12 9QA, England

AD MATS, AD MATS AND MORE AD MATS! IAN has collected quite a few which makes ABSURD wonderfully visual. He is also real big on film credits. Numbers 8 and 9 (the last I've seen) have good information on the prolific Jess Franco (listing many productions I have never even heard of) and a piece on the Santo films. An excellent fanzine from England. Since I was never sure about the price, I suggest you write to the editor and ask (but airmail is excruciatingly slow so try to be patient).

LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS

Richard Klemensen

P.O. Box 3107

Des Moines, Iowa 50316

MY FAVORITE SEMI-PRO ZINE OF ALL TIME because I'm a huge fan of Hammer Studios. LSOH can't be beat. Dick only publishes once in a blue moon but when he does you get a big, thick book full of interviews, rare photos, insights and more about what made this studio great.

The latest (#10/11) is a 168 page monster jammed with great letters, talks with many Hammer people (Linda Hayden's segment was worth the cover price for me), information about releases on tape in the U.S., an outstanding behind-the-scenes feature on *The Kiss of the Vampire* and a stunning color cover.

I think whar endears LSOH to me most is the way the editor's love for Hammer films shines through on every page in a way that is easily accessible to the average film viewer (meaning there is no condescending tone). I've met Dick and he is an incredibly nice guy who deserves your support. Back issues are going fast so I strongly suggest you write and negotiate getting your hands on copies of what's still available before they all sell out!



B-Movie Heaven

IT COULD be argued who the best mail order video companies are but I have to put my money on SINISTER CINEMA as tops overall. Their 60 page newsprint catalog is well organized, illustrated and lists hundreds of public domain, black and white feature films dating back as far as 1911 (an early, silent version of H. Rider Haggard's *She*) continuing on up to 1973 (Klimovsky's *Orgy of the Vampires*) with every schlocky B-movie in between. There is also an excellent selection of great trailer compilation tapes (try some of these as they really are a lot of fun).

Advertising a majority of their collection as being mastered directly from film (16mm, 35mm, etc) is a big plus. What puzzles me is why a company that prides itself on quality originals would record on no-name brand tapes. Everything I've received has looked fine irregardless and this is their only short-coming.

You can phone in your order (415/359-3292, this is

At a Glance

SINISTER CINEMA
P.O. Box 777
Pacific, CA 94044
★★★★

Pros: Better quality because tapes are mostly dubbed from film (I mention, fine catalogs, huge selection, reliable service and at \$19 per title (including postage) SINISTER CINEMA is less expensive than most of their competitors.

Cons: Use of non-brand name blank tape stock.

a new number all for you old-timers) as major credit cards are accepted. When I rang-up SINISTER CINEMA for a trio of Mexican vampire oldies, owner Greg Luce joked with me "oh-no, you're not one of those," but thereafter admitted some of these flicks with undeserved bad reputations were actually quite atmospheric.

Naschy fans! This is the place to go for the best, less-cut version of Count *Dracula's Great Love* (83 minutes, that's 7 longer than the television print you can rent in most video clubs). Wow! What a different film this becomes without so many edits! It's well worth it to see just what you've been missing. Recommended. ■

The Vamoose 8-Track Rating System

- ***** Top-notch, best quality, price and service available
- **** Exceptional, highly recommended
- *** Competent, worth looking into
- ** Passable, better than nothing
- * Inferior, save your money

FYI

IF YOU'RE THINKING about buying a new VCR, I would recommend considering one of the new decks with four heads (it really makes a difference in picture quality and you get better dubs).

Also, the on-screen programming is a nice feature to have. No more screwing around with tiny dials and knobs and then missing what you were trying to record at 4:00 AM. ■

Collecting

IT'S TOUGH BEING A fan of obscure horror nowadays. Drive-in's (where I got my first glimpses of these films) and inner-city grindhouses have all but disappeared. Giant multiplexes have replaced them with rarely anything to offer besides the latest megabuck productions from Hollywood. Video is clearly the way to go.

What if you want to see something that's not available on video yet? One way is to trade with video collectors and there is a newspaper that caters to this crowd called VIDEO MANIA.

You can place an inexpensive advertisement in their classified section and reach a large audience. I've done this myself for several years and built a collection from nothing to one that is fairly impressive (although my list of wants is still quite long). Their address is Box 47, Princeton, WI 54968. Subscriptions are \$11.95 per year. ■

Thanks

TO CRAIG LEDBETTER (whose superb zine *EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA* was largely inspirational) and Dick Klemensen (whose wonderful *LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS* contains some words to live by for fanzine editors).

Special thanks to my wife, Kay for tolerating my obsession and coming up with the moniker for this publication.

Forrest J. Ackerman and FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND for sparking my interest in horror cinema so long ago. May as well also blame Michael Weldon's *PSYCHOTRONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FILM* for reactivating my interest in the genre back in 1984.

I am also indebted to the West Chester Historical Society for the visuals in my editorial (and to long-time friend Tom Wise for giving me a place to stay that weekend).

In my salute to the late, great Exton Drive-in and the now defunct Warner Theatre I didn't acknowledge the one person without whom I never would have seen all those films in the first place. Thanks Dad! ■

Next Issue

The first letters page (I hope!)

A Robert Quarry overview

Vampire Cinema of Gerardo de Leon

Another mini-profile and tons of juicy reviews

**YORGA, THE DEATHMASTER
IS BACK FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE
...and Evil will have its finest hour!**



**THE RETURN OF
COUNT YORGA**

GP

ALL AGES ADMITTED

Parental Guidance Suggested

MPAA Rating

Parents Strongly Cautioned

I found a pressbook for this film at FANEX 4 (held August 11-12 in Towson, MD) and couldn't resist using this ad mat to plug the Robert Quarry piece next ish. See ya then!

